

# YOUTH SERVICES POLICY

<b>Title:</b> Media Access and Public Information <b>Next Annual Review Date:</b> 01/23/2010	<b>Type:</b> C. Field Operations <b>Sub Type:</b> 1. General <b>Number:</b> C.1.13
	<b>Page 1 of 6</b>
<b>References:</b> ACA Standards 2-CO-1A-25, 1A-26, 1A-27, and 1A-27-1 (Administration of Correctional Agencies), 3-JTS-1A-25, 1A-27 and 1A-27-1 (Juvenile Training Schools); YS Policies A.2.12 "Personnel Records", A.3.3 "Collection and Fees for Reproduction of Public Records", B.3.2 "Access to and Release of Active and Inactive Records - Juvenile" and C.2.2 "Facility Riot, Hunger Strike, Significant Disturbance and Hostage Situation"; DYS Policy and Procedure No. 1.3 "Public Information Program"; DPS&C/LSUHSC JCP Policies J/HC-RT 02-02 "Disclosure of Medical Record Information" and J/HC-RT 05-02 "Confidentiality of Health Records and Health Information"	
<b>STATUS: Approved</b>	
<b>Approved By:</b> Mary L. Livers, Deputy Secretary	<b>Date of Approval:</b> 01/23/2009

## I. AUTHORITY:

Deputy Secretary of Youth Services as contained in La. R.S. 36:405.

## II. PURPOSE:

To establish the Deputy Secretary's policy for maintaining appropriate relationships with the public, public officials, the news media, juvenile justice agencies, and other youth-serving agencies. Through these established relationships, Youth Services (YS) will promote better understanding of the agency's goals, objectives and programs.

The agency's goal is to protect public safety by providing safe and effective individualized services to youth who have been adjudicated and placed in the custody or under supervision of YS.

The objective is to assist adjudicated youth in redirecting their lives toward responsible citizenship so they will become productive, law-abiding citizens.

The primary clients of YS are youth who have been adjudicated delinquent or Families in Need of Services (FINS). Services and programming include intensive residential care for secure care youth; residential group home services for non-secure care youth; probation and parole supervision and court prevention and diversion programs.

### III. APPLICABILITY:

Deputy Secretary, Undersecretary or designee, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Facility Directors, and the YS Central Office's Director of Communications.

### IV. DEFINITIONS:

**Commercial Producers** - photographers, writers and filmmakers and other media professionals who intend to sell their work product for profit.

**News Media/Media Representatives** - properly credentialed and identifiable news coverage organizations. A reporter/journalist/member of the news media is a person employed by, contracting with, or freelancing for, a bona fide news organization. Authors, photographers, videographers and filmmakers, whether commercial, freelance, independent or employed by a news medium, are included.

**Unit Head** - Deputy Secretary, Undersecretary, Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Undersecretary, Facility Directors, and Regional Managers.

**YS Central Office** - Offices of the Deputy Secretary, Undersecretary, Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, and their support staff.

### V. POLICY:

It is the Deputy Secretary's policy to provide information that is truthful and accurate to the public, the media and other agencies, consistent with the custody and privacy interests of YS, its staff, and youth. Confidential information shall be released in accordance with the law and agency policy.

At no time will appropriate information be withheld from the news media and the public regarding emergency or non-emergency situations.

Data and information protected by the U. S. Freedom of Information Act or state privacy laws including Public Records statutes will be provided timely to members of the public and the news media when requested.

No information identifying any youth in YS custody or in any YS program will be released to the public with the exception that requests for information regarding a specific juvenile shall only be released in accordance with state statutes as contained in the Louisiana Children's Code or at the direction of the courts.

In an emergency situation such as an escape from a secure facility, residential group home, or vehicle transporting a youth in custody, physical descriptions only will be released as a public safety measure.

All news releases and other outreach materials contain contact information for the Communications Director, including email addresses and telephone numbers. Members of the news media and the public are encouraged to contact the Communications Director for needed information.

Agency telephones are equipped with voice mail allowing callers to leave messages when staff are unavailable.

All agency brochures and publications contain contact information for appropriate staff (i.e. recruitment brochures have contact information for the Human Resources Department; booklets, videos, etc., for youth and families have contact information for the Family Ombudsman, etc.).

Contact information for certain members of the Administrative Staff, including the Communications Director and Regional Managers, is easily found on the agency website. Members of the public are encouraged to contact members of the Administrative Staff using the telephone numbers and email addresses provided.

The website is interactive, containing an easily accessible screen that allows visitors to request information and enter their own contact information. The YS webmaster monitors this screen, and sends on-line requests for information to appropriate staff for response.

**VI. PUBLIC INFORMATION PROCEDURES:**

- A. All staff shall be responsive to inquiries from the public, and local, state and federal agencies, by providing prompt, complete responses to all correspondence and other requests.
- B. Inquiries from legislative and executive bodies should be referred to authorized staff as designated by the Deputy Secretary.

**VII. MEDIA PROCEDURES:**

- A. The Communications Director is responsible for public relations and public information activities. The Communications Director serves as agency spokesperson and coordinates media outreach through news releases, video releases, or the use of other appropriate communication tools, during emergency situations and non-emergency situations. Information regarding routine activities or special events will be provided to the public as appropriate. All media contact regarding agency activities will be handled by the Communications Director.
- B. It is not the agency's intent to restrict access to local media or community groups by local staff. Regional Managers are encouraged to inform local media about interesting, non-controversial events or accomplishments by staff or youth that may present opportunities to generate positive local human interest stories. Regional Managers may also respond to requests

for such information by local media or may send such requests to the Communications Director, at their discretion. In all cases where Regional Managers have provided information to news media outlets, they should inform the Communications Director as a courtesy and provide news clippings if possible.

- C. News media members making inquiries, conducting interviews, or seeking approval to visit a facility shall first contact the Communications Director. The Communications Director will consider the scope of the story and the unit's ability to accommodate the visit prior to making a recommendation to the Deputy Secretary for his approval.

In a non-emergency situation, media access will be allowed to any area of the Central Office and regional offices upon request. In emergency situations, media access may be restricted to conference rooms, or the offices of the Deputy Secretary, Communications Director and Regional Managers.

Upon request, media MAY be granted access to most areas of secure facilities, with approval from the Deputy Secretary and the Facility Director, so long as routine operations are not disrupted and the privacy and confidentiality of youth and staff are not breached. Concerns for the safety of youth, staff and visitors will be a primary consideration.

In emergency situations, media access to facilities will be limited to briefings in roll call areas, conference rooms, or other areas where visitors are unlikely to come into contact with youth and/or staff. The Communications Director will periodically brief media on the situation.

In certain emergency situations where public safety is of concern, no media visits will be allowed; briefings will take place at the Central Office or other location to be determined to be safe.

- D. The Unit Head shall notify the Deputy Secretary of any significant or potentially controversial event.
- E. Upon receiving the request from national and/or international media, the Communications Director shall notify the Deputy Secretary.
- F. The Communications Director or Facility Director will escort media visitors when they are present in all facilities and the Central Office for the duration of the visit.

- G. The Communications Director or the Deputy Secretary shall release information to the media regarding official matters. Staff may be called upon by the Communications Director to provide information to the media, and staff shall be knowledgeable of issues and YS policies and shall ensure the accuracy of information before releasing it.
- H. The Communications Director may contact employees and their supervisors for information. If an employee is asked by the Communications Director to give information directly to a reporter, the Communications Director shall participate in the media interview. Employees shall provide accurate information to the Communications Director and the reporter. With the exception of professional and management staff, employees are not required to speak with members of the news media.
- I. Employees may be contacted by a reporter about activities outside their job duties; employees are free to talk about personal activities. As a courtesy, employees are asked to let their supervisor and the Communications Director know about such interviews.
- J. Media contacts with youth are at the discretion of the Deputy Secretary, with input from appropriate staff.
- K. Written permission must be obtained from a youth's parent, guardian or attorney prior to interviewing, photographing, and/or audio or video recording the youth, except when the youth is not identifiable. A youth 18 years old or older may sign a media release [Attachment C.1.13 (b)].
- L. Interviews with youth who are assigned to areas for behavior problems are discouraged.
- M. No remuneration will be provided to any youth. Media coverage that might enhance the status of an adjudicated youth is discouraged.

**8. COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION PROCEDURES:**

- A. Commercial producers seeking access to YS facilities, employees or youth, are required to make a written request to the Communications Director. Written requests must include:
  - 1. Name, job title and employer of person requesting visit (if free-lance, who they represent);
  - 2. Topic of story, where it will be used, purpose;
  - 3. Name of individual(s) to be interviewed, if known;

4. Date and time of arrival, anticipated duration;
  5. Name of all persons accompanying requestor; and
  6. If applicable, a hold harmless clause as follows: "I recognize that a visit to a Youth Services facility may present certain risks/hazards. I agree to assume all ordinary and/or usual risks to my personal safety inherent in a visit to facilities of this type."
- B. Requests shall be forwarded to the Deputy Secretary for approval prior to project commencement.
- C. All commercial producers are required to sign a Location Agreement form [Attachment C.1.13 (d)] upon their arrival at the unit. The Location Agreement will specifically outline the scope of the work to be performed. The Communications Director must review the finished product prior to distribution to ensure that it has been made in compliance with the Location Agreement form.

**9. PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES:**

- A. Appropriate relationships with community organizations are vital to public support of YS programs. Regional Managers are encouraged to accept opportunities for speaking engagements and/or make presentations before community organizations and schools to inform members of the public about agency activities and gain local support for programs. Regional Managers should respond promptly to such requests for information or to provide speakers to civic organizations, schools, law enforcement agencies and other groups seeking an understanding of YS programs. Regional Managers should notify the Central Office Deputy Assistant Secretary and Communications Director of such appearances.
- B. Regional Offices shall maintain a supply of materials (brochures, booklets, DVDs, etc.) describing YS services and programs. Such materials shall be made available to youth in YS custody or supervision, their families and the general public.

**Previous Regulation/Policy Number:** C.1.13

**Previous Effective Date:** 06/14/07



**Attachments/References:** C.1.13 (a) Visitor Media Release Form 1-23-09.doc



C.1.13 (b) Youth Media Release Form 1-23-09.doc



C.1.13 (c) Media Release (youth) General Non-commercial Purposes 1-23-09.doc



C.1.13 (d) Location Agreement Form 1-23-09.doc